

Capt. Donald McCauley, Southampton, Ont.

Interviewed by Wm. Wakeham and Richard Rathbun,
September 7, 1894.

There were very few houses here when I came here in 1855. There were a few fishing then and others working at other work. I have been fishing myself all the time since I came here. (With reference to the region between Kincardine and Cape Hurd). I never saw any pound nets here. I never saw one, but I heard there were some, but I did not see them. Fyke nets were never used here. Seines have been used here. Up at the Fishing Islands they were catching a great deal of herring the first year I was here; on a number of the islands there. They used to fish a good deal at the mouth of Sable River. They have been fishing seines there until

*Experience
History*

P.

*Fykes.
Seines
history
Loc.
herring*

Seines

last year, both Indians and whites. The first work that was done in this country was fishing with seines at the Fishing Islands. I do not think they have fished any seines there in the last 3 or 4 years. They used pretty good sized seines. The mesh was bigger in the wings than in the bag. I think the size in the bag was about 2 1/2. It would be a good deal bigger in the wings. They caught herring in the seines. On the Sable sands they caught whitefish. They caught no whitefish to speak of among the islands. They would catch suckers also, but when the herring would come in there would not be hardly any other fish among them. They fished late in the fall about the 25th of September, and would fish until November 10 or 12. I never saw it tried in the spring. On the Sable sands they were taking a good many hauls of whitefish. Those white-

*descrip.**Loc.
herring
n.f.**suckers.**season*

Seines

fish would be all sizes, big and small.

*Darius
97.11
assoc.*

They took them in the fall in the herring season. They were seining for herring and took whitefish with them. Sometimes get good hauls of whitefish without any herring and sometimes there might be 2 schools come in the seines at once, but mostly it was either whitefish or herring. I never was

Smallmouth

there but 2 days. They were taking a good many little whitefish one year, too small to send to market. There has been no hook and

*Hooks
Loc.*

line fishing about here. They do it up north around the Manitoulins. Gill net fishing has been the main fishing here. I fished ⁹ ^{5.}

q. chief

a couple of years with seines the first years I was in this country. When I came ⁹

*Seines
refished*

here there were 3 boats fishing gill nets with 3 men to a boat. There is the same number of men to a boat now, except sometimes,

*q.
history*

when the fishing is not good, they will get

*2.
history*

them down to 2 men and use less nets. I was a very small fishery when I first came here and about the beginning of the fishing here. The number of boats gradually increased from then. I have seen as high as 24 sail boats out of here about 12 or 13 years ago. There were more fishing with sail boats then than at any other time. There were no tugs then. They started tugs about 10 years ago. I think James Clark had the first tug that I know of. He was connected with the Buffalo Fish Company. McKenzie owned the first tug that was out of this place about 10 years ago. After that the tugs were increasing all the time. There has been 5 tugs here since 3 years ago. The tugs sometimes fish on the same grounds with the sail boats. They can fish together, but the tugs can go in calm weather better than the boats can, and can make trips quicker. Some of the

*grounds
tugs
boats*

4
Descrip.
sail boat men are on the tugs. We use 3 kinds of gill nets here. There is a whitefish net, which is 4 5/8 and 4 3/4-inch mesh; the trout nets are 5 1/2 to 6-inch and the herring nets 2 3/4-inch. The whitefish nets are about 18 meshes deep; from 16 to 20. The trout nets are from 14 to 16 meshes, and the herring nets some of them are 40 meshes deep and some 60 meshes deep. The whitefish nets have from 50 to 90 sinkers, about 8 feet apart. The difference in the net is caused by different quality of twine. The whitefish nets are from 70 to 90, according to the quality of the twine. The trout nets run from 40 to 60, according to the twine. Our nets are all made of linen here. We used to make our nets all by hand, but now they are made by machinery. They have been making them by machinery for about 20 years. We have used some nets made in this country.

q. I believe they are cheaper than the foreign
nets. They go north to the Fishing Islands
for the herring. From Chiefs Point up to
Cape Hurd. They fish inside in the bays in
shallow water. A herring boat does not use
very long nets. They will use from 6 to 12
nets apiece. They do not like to put them
all in the water at one time, as they are
afraid of losing them by storms. They use
smaller boats for the herring netting than
we have here. Some of our boats are built
here and some in Goderich. They are from 28
to 32 feet keel, and some of them are over 5
tons and some less. They are 2-masted. A
sail boat will use about 60 whitefish nets
altogether. They will be divided into 4
gangs, and generally there is one gang
ashore getting it ready to take out again.
There would be about 45 nets in the water at
one time. The tugs have more than 120 nets.

fishing
boats

rigs

boats

boats in
general

rigs

4. The small boats, some of them fish more than others. When I started fishing first we would use about 30 short nets. They would be hardly as long as the trout nets we have now. We were using stone sinkers then and could not use as long nets. We began to use the lead sinkers about 20 years ago. We used to use cedar floats about 2 feet 9 inches long, with a string on the end of them and tied on the side line, and we would take them off every day when we lifted them. When we began to use lead sinkers we began to lengthen the nets. I think the lead sinkers started first in Georgian Bay. They were using stones and large floats all over the lakes when I came here. At that time we never set them back at once. We used to fish 5-inch mesh in the beginning. We used 5-inch all the time we used stone sinkers. When we began to use lead sinkers we began

descrip.

4. to use 4 1/2 and 4 3/4 mesh. That was about the time they began to make nets by machinery. We had to make the sinkers ourselves, however, and do now. We have molds to run them and can do it very easily. The white-fish nets are fished as far north as Big Island or Loyal Island with the tugs, and the sail boats will go that far sometimes. The tugs do not go farther than that. They go south about 15 or 20 miles, half way to Kincardine. They go out about 40 miles into the lake over to the big reef. The sail boats run over to the big reef sometimes, but not so many now since the tugs started. The boats do not like to stay with the tugs if they can help it. I have often gone out and had to beat both ways, and sometimes they have to weather a storm. Fogs are the worst thing we had with the fish boats. It is worse than smoke. If we have a long dis-

Loc.

9.
Season
tance to go, it is no use to use the oars when we are becalmed. We begin to fish in deep water between the reef and the shore in the spring as soon as the lake is clear of ice. Some years it would be clear about the middle of April and some years it will be in May before it is clear. During the summer months we are scattered all around. We go out on the reef the latter end of May and June and July. The tugs will go in August, but the fish boats do not like to go then, as the days are getting shorter and storms are coming on. We expect to have the whitefish nets ashore before the beginning of September generally. We do not use whitefish nets after that. We take up the trout nets then and use them during September and October. They are shorter gangs, probably from 12 to 14 nets to a gang and 2 gangs to a boat. The tugs will have 3 gangs and have

trout rigs

20 nets in a gang. The trout nets are set on the rocks in shallow water from 25 fathoms in to 10 fathoms. They will be fishing all along the coast north of here up as far as Cape Hurd. Sometimes the fishermen from Goderich and Kincardine move up north also, and fishermen from here go up and camp out and fish up above here. When we started fishing first, we never went out over 12 miles and used to get good fishing. We would catch mostly whitefish. When we went out to deep water we would get trout. Now we cannot catch many fish in those places. The whitefish have been caught out there. Now the trout fishermen could not live with all the whitefish they get. We get mostly small trout in deep water now. You cannot get the big trout at all until September. There are not as many as there used to be, hardly half as many as when I started here

*9 trout**loc.**w/ trout
abund.**Trout
loc.
big
season
decrease*

first. I guess they have been fishing too much for them, and also these rafts are what has killed the whitefish in the Georgian Bay. The rafts do harm along the outer coast. We get bark on the reefs in deep water some-times. In the fall we do not get the bark here. There are saw-mills along the shore also, and they do not do the fishing any good. In some places I think they let the sawdust go into the water. Even if they were to pile it up, a strong wind would carry it in the water. In some places I think there was enough sawdust went in to cover up the spawning grounds. Between here and Cape Hurd there were over 10 mills at one time, but not so many now. They are good sized mills, all steam mills. There were no saw-mills there when I came here. They put them in about 14 or 15 years ago. The big trout have decreased since then. They were very

g. trout
decrease
fishing
bark.

sawmills

trout
decrease

plentiful until the rafts and the saw-mills started. Those big trout are what we call the fall trout. They are like the ones we got to-day. Those we got to-day we got in from 20 to 25 fathoms of water on stony bottom. Those trout we caught to-day were caught in the small mesh. It is a good place to set for big trout in the fall. Those big trout come in along the shore for spawning. I have seen the spawn running from them in November. Very seldom see any running from them before November. They will come in in September to take a cruise to the grounds before they begin spawning. They will come in and go away before they spawn, like a bird will build its nest; they will start building the nest before they lay the eggs, and that is the nature of the fish. They will come in and go away again preparing for the hatchery. We never get those

Fall trout

kind

Loc.

mesh

spawning

movements

season

front,
deep water
abund.

deep
abund.

movements

front
movements
food.

deep
food.

deep
depth
loc.

big trout in the summer. Those small deep water trout are keeping up better than any other fish. They are not quite so plentiful as they were at one time. The whitefish are not as abundant as they used to be. There are very few of them left on the shore now. They were very plentiful here at one time, but sometimes the grounds would be empty and then they would come in again and would be moving from place to place. The whitefish go in bodies, but not in schools as herring will. The trout do not go together as much as the whitefish. The trout are more for feeding on small fish and the whitefish feed on worms. These worms we do not find as abundant as we used to. In Georgian Bay we used to get our nets full of these fish worms, but now we do not get them. These worms are on muddy bottom. We used to get the whitefish in from 30 to 15 fathoms, and

wf.
would get them all up and down the coast unless there was rocky bottom. We fish on sand or mud bottom. We fish for them from May to September. In the old times we would not get any in October and November here.

Season
Spawning
size
Loc.
It was another kind of fish that was coming in to spawn then. Whitefish were coming in to spawn then after the trout quit spawning, in November. We could fish for them when I first came here, and I fished for them a little at that time. They were big whitefish weighing from 5 to 10 pounds. We fished for them in shallow water. Could not get them here, but got them up by the Fishing Islands and at Cape Hurd. I do not know whether any whitefish come in there now or not, as we do not try for them. There was no close season at that time. These whitefish that we got in 35 fathoms and less were medium size fish averaging from 3 to 4 pounds. Sometimes

they would be smaller than others, but they would average about 3 or 4 pounds at that time. We would fish for them all during the spring and summer, but not in the fall. We would catch the trout at the same time if we went to deep water. We would catch some trout with the whitefish. The market was very poor then. Whitefish were worth more than trout then. The whitefish are not as common as they used to be for 2 reasons: the ground is dirtier and there are too many fishermen after them. The dirt on the ^{Collection} grounds was caused by rafts and saw-mills. I feel sure the stuff from the saw-mills has gone out far enough to get on their grounds. There has been enough of it in some places to do harm, and there has been more or less of it all along. It hurts the whitefish because their feeding grounds are on the bottom, eating worms, and the feeding grounds

W.F.

Season

Front
Season

Loc.

W.F. Front
Assoc.
Market

W.F. value

Decrease
foul bottom
overfishingback
Sawmills

W.F.
bark
of trout are all over wherever they can find anything. Whitefish were plentiful until the saw-mills and the rafts started. Whenever they are out with a big fleet of logs in a boom, and 2 or 3 tugs holding it, the logs just grind one another in there and peel off the bark, and when the fine bark that is inside gets in the nets they are destroyed. The rafts go most anywhere. They are going all over. Some of them are going down the river, and all over. If the wind is off this side of the lake, they will follow this side on their way down to Port Huron. I never noticed them rafting the lumber until about 8 or 9 years ago, but there might be some in the Georgian Bay before that. We cannot stop this rafting business. The rafts would come right in close to shore when they could keep away. Between Cape Hurd and Sarnia the rafts did not pass close

inshore much. We were troubled with bark here considerably and enough to hurt the whitefish. 35 fathoms of water would be about 8 miles off shore, and the rafts would go inside of that sometimes, if the wind was from the east. There are so many men living by fishing and one has just as much right to fish as another, and there are too many making their living at it is another reason of the decrease. The seines did some harm in taking ashore the spawn and small fish and in dragging the grounds. The whitefish spawn on gravelly bottom and on stony bottom, and on the honey-comb bottom. There has been some decrease in the trout, but they hold their own better than any other fish. We never used to take any small whitefish in the gill nets. Sometimes one might get tangled up, but as a general thing we would not get any less than 1 1/2 or 2 pounds. Some-

Too many fishermen

Seines harmful
Spawn small fish
w.f. spawning

Trout abundance

w.f. size

times we would get a small trout in the gill nets by their getting meshed their teeth or getting tangled up. The smallest size trout that should be marketed would be about 1 pound. The market will take 1 pound fish. Some would rather have them than one weighing 5 pounds. They send them down the country in Canada, and in the States also, It is very seldom you will see any weighing less than 2 pounds, however. It is very seldom we get any whitefish too small to market. About 2 pounds is the smallest we get. In the gill nets we do not get hardly anything but whitefish, herring and trout. Get once in awhile a pickerel. Never get perch, black bass or catfish. Might get occasionally an odd sturgeon. Get no sheepshead. Get the lawyers, but we do not eat them or make any use of them here. Do not get pike or maskinonge. We get plenty of suckers. We

trout
small

min. size

market

size

W. f.
size

G. cutch,

W. f.
trout
herring
walleye

no perch
no bass
no cat

sturgeon
ling

no eel
no maskin.
suckers

get the common whitefish, and then we get

cisco. the cisco, but very seldom get them. They

go in as whitefish if they are big size. We

menominee have the menominee whitefish, and some peo-

ple do not know the difference between them

and would think they were getting whitefish.

no bluefin
no longjaw Do not have the blue fin or the long-jaw.

live
var. We get the fall trout and we get another

loc. kind on the middle ground between the deep

water and the inside ground on muddy bottom

in 30 to 40 fathoms. They are something

like the fall trout, only a smaller size and

stouter and different shape. Then we get

the deep water fish and then we get the reef

fish. The reef fish are like Lake Superior

fish. They are fat and stout. On some

reefs you will get this kind. What we call

the fall trout, like we had to-day, we get

in shallow water, and they will get another

kind about 2 to 4 pounds, on the middle

grounds from 30 to 50 fathoms, and then, when we get past them again, we get the deep water trout, and then, when we get on the reefs in the middle of the lake, we will get another kind. The reef trout are fat and stout with small heads and a very stout body. The deep water trout are a big belly and small body and a smaller fish. On the middle grounds we get very chunky trout, but a very good fish to eat and for market. They are different from the fall fish. They differ in the color and shape. The fall trout are plainer colors. The middle ground trout are spotted more than the fall trout. The deep water fish are dark. The black trout are the fall trout. The trout we got to-day were sand trout and they are lighter colored. The fall trout are generally dark colored. About $\frac{2}{3}$ of the fish we got to-day were ⁹ alive when we lifted the nets. The nets had

4,
cond. fish

been out 4 nights. About a 1 1/2 pound trout will go through our nets. They are making oil of the offal. They have been making oil of it for a good many years. I think it would do harm to put the offal back in the water. It would affect the whitefish the most because they are a more delicate fish, and I guess it would not do the trout any good to have dead offal or any dirt on the grounds. I do not think the trout will eat the offal if it is thrown in, unless it was very fresh. I do not believe in throwing the offal back or any dead fish. I do not think the tannery here does any harm to the fisheries. In the fall of the year you can see the river here swarming with young fish. I never noticed any whitefish or trout in the river. Bass, perch and pickerel come into the river, and sturgeon also. There are not many sturgeon in this region,

q.
 Trout
 mesh.
 offal

Tannery

River fish
 no whitefish
 trout
 bass
 perch
 pickerel
 Sturgeon

River

Sturgeon

as the water is too clean for them. I do not think they spawn up this river. They might come in the river through the summer. I do not think the pickerel come to this river to spawn.

As long as there are so many taking fish out of the lake as there are now, the fish must get scarcer. The only thing is they will have to quit soon. There are some men quitting now. They cannot get men to work for them less than \$30 a month and board, and paying so much for men and nets they cannot stand it. They are fishing more nets than ever before altogether, however, taking in the tugs. If there were no tugs fishing and the less boats there are the fish would get some chance. The more nets there are in, the less chance there is for the fish to live. There are 3 tugs and 3 boats here that do not sell to the Buffalo Company.

walleye
spawning

Fish
decrease

Too many
fishing

Some will have
to quit.

Expenses

9. more
fished than
ever.

tugs

Too many
nets.

market.

a. g. j.

They send their fish to market themselves anywhere where they can get a market for them. The Buffalo Fish Company only get the fish from 2 tugs.

Close season

I think the close season is all right.

Trout
Spawning

It may help the fish until they get a chance to spawn. There is one kind only of trout that spawn out on the reefs in the summer, and the rest they spawn in November. They do not collect any spawn here from the trout.

Collecting
eggs

I heard they were doing it in Wiarton, but not here. If we get young whitefish and

Figures

m. f.
Trout
Throwing out

trout in our nets, we let them go if they are alive, but if they are dead we take them with us. The small trout, if they are dead in the nets when we lift them, some will float and some will sink, and the whitefish the same. If there is wind in them, they will float, and if there is no wind in them they will sink. We do not get the bloats un-

Bloats

til we get out in deep water and then we get too many of them, as they snarl up the nets. They will all float and we throw them out to the sea gulls. The sea gulls will take anything when they are hungry, but they prefer the bloaters. They stay on the surface and the gulls can see them readily. I guess the size of the mesh is about right. The herring net I do not know anything about. I do not fish herring nets because a man who is fishing one rig cannot attend to both. The herring are very plenty, but they have to set for them in shallow water and in the stormy time of the year. Herring nets are pretty costly, small mesh, fine twine and deep nets, and the storms are apt to destroy them. The herring are pretty plenty, and there are not so many after them. If there was a close season on both sides of the lake, I think it would help, but when it is not on

g
proper mesh

herring g.
mesh

herring
abund.
season

net
expensive

close season

both sides of the lake, I do not think it is
so good, because fish travel and go from one
place to another. I am sure the trout we
get on this side of the lake go to the other
side. What is to hinder them? I believe
the trout go from one place to another just
as cattle will that are feeding. Our fish-
eries are in better condition I believe than
they are on the other side. There is more
deep water and colder water on this side,
and they are a better eating fish here than
down in Goderich and Bayfield. The water
here is colder and pure, and down there, when
a storm comes up, the water gets muddy. I
think it would help to fish in November and
save all the spawn. When the fish are young,
there are many enemies running after them.
There is the bill-fish, with a bill about 6
inches long, and they will eat the spawn.
They are very long and covered with thick

Trout
movements

Canadian
fisheries
best

Cond. of
bottom
& water

Enemies

gar

J.

A. J. J.

Reg

Fig

scales all over. The sucker is a great enemy to the spawn also. They will suck it, but will not eat it. They do not eat anything, but will suck it. They do not swallow the spawn, but suck it and take the substance out. The bill-fish are more numerous up in the Georgian Bay than here. The water is too clean for them here and they like dirty water and still water. They will grow about 5 feet long. We do not get eels here. I have heard them say they got them up in the Georgian Bay, but I never saw one. We get the lamprey eel here. They will stick on any fish. They will stick to the fish in the nets and we bring them in the boat sometimes. Sturgeon are something in the nature of the suckers. I never found anything in their stomachs, but what is like the suckers. They are not like the pike, which will eat snakes or anything at all. We have water

*Suckers**gar**Eels**Lamprey**Sturgeon**Esos**Water Snakes*

snakes about here. Up at Georgian Bay and Tober Morey they are very plentiful, and there are rattlesnakes there also. There is one island up there where they are very plentiful. There are a good many on the peninsula yet between here and Tober Morey. It is a rare thing to see them here, however. Between Tober Morey and Big Island they are very plentiful.

A gang of nets costs about \$250, besides the corks and the leads. That would be a gang of 16 nets. We have to pay from \$2.00 to \$2.50 a pound for the twine. I had one net stolen and found it in Detour. There would be 3 pounds of twine to a net and 18 nets to a gang, and sometimes they will be as high as \$2.30 a pound. I am near done out, and the fishery is near done out, too. I am getting old and the fishing is getting slack, and I guess we will both play out to-

Rattlesnakes

4
cost

size of size

Fishing
decline

a. Sen

gether. I know the tugs can stand it a good
deal better than the boats, but a good many
of the tugs are going to quit soon. The Buf-
falo Fish Company have about as much busi-
ness as they used to. Besides the Buffalo
Company, there is Long & McCauley. They
ship their fish themselves. We do not salt
any fish now, unless they are not worth send-
ing to market. Most all of the fish are
sent by railroad from here. The tannery has
been running here 13 or 14 years. They get
their hides mostly from the Southern States.
The deepest water we fish in is 100 fathoms.
We get small trout in that depth. They are
very good to eat, however. We begin fishing
for them pretty early in the spring. It is
very hard on corks to fish in that depth. A
man wants 2 sets of corks so as to keep one
in the lake and one ashore. We are often
bothered by ashes and clinkers from steam-

g.
Lugs.

markets

tannery

front
depth

season

hard on
corks.

Cinders.

boats. The shallowest water we have on the reef is from 8 to 9 fathoms. That would break in a gale of wind so that it would be dangerous to cross. Sometimes there is a very strong current in the lake. I have seen it drag nets for miles. The current is a good deal according to the way the wind is. If the wind is blowing hard for a week or ten days from one direction, the current would be liable to follow that. The current goes to the bottom or else it would not carry the nets that way. I have seen the nets twisted and torn in all directions in 60 and 70 fathoms, particularly if the current is uneven and part of the nets in shallow water and a part in even water. The current would be stronger where there was even water. There is no current when there is a long spell of fine weather. When I first came here, the fishermen made dykes and harbors

Reef
depth
break in a
gale

currents

Effect on
nets

level of
water

to suit their purposes, and in 5 years I have seen it where I could walk with slippers where the boats were lying 5 years before. Where I was sailing over solid rock, in 10 years I have seen it dry land. Channels that we used to run through are now dry land. But it is higher now than it was last year at this time. It is a good deal lower than it was when I came here first. The water, I think, was fully 6 feet higher all over the lake when I first came here than it is now. I do not know the reason, unless it is that the bottom of the St. Clair River is lower. The winters are not as severe as when I first came here. We used to have more snow and ice then. Fishermen are generally mending their nets in the winter, and do not do much winter fishing. They tried it, but fishermen must work at their nets in the winter as well as the summer. Mending

*Winters less
severe*

occupation

*winter
fishing*

again

your nets and getting new nets ready and making corks and leads and every thing like that takes all the time. Some make their own corks and some buy them.

